Tiger tragedy in Nandankanan zoological park

£*90. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI:
SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA:†

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the overdose of medicines, without identifying the disease, have led to the tragic death of tigers at the Nandankanan Zoo in Orissa;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, what are the causes that led to death of tigers there; and

(d) whether Government would handover investigation to CBI to find out the real truth of this mysterious death of wild animals?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) to (d) Sixteen tigers were administered a dose of Berenil between 0.8—1.6 gm per 100 kg of body weight on 3rd July, 2000 after one tiger died of Trypanosomiasis on 23rd June, 2000 and symptoms of the same disease were seen in the second tiger on 2nd July, 2000. According to the report of the central team and the opinion of Experts, the drug administered and its doses were appropriate Postmortem findings and the histopathological examination has clearly revealed that tigers died of heavy infection of Trypanosomiasis. The animal which showed sign of sickness on 2nd July died on 4th July. Of the remaining 15 tigers which were administered drug on 3rd July, 8 tigers

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Ramachandra Khuntia.

£Question Nos. 84 and 90 were taken together.

(six white and two coloured) died between 4th and 5th July, 2000. One white tiger each died on 6th and 7th July, 2000 respectively.

The Central Government was informed of the happenings on the morning of 5th July, 2000. The Ministry appointed an Expert Committee to find out the causes of death and to suggest ways and means to prevent recurrence of such happenings on 6th July, 2000. The Committee was asked to start its work from 7th July and to give their report by 15th July. In the interim period the Ministry also decided to have an expert consultation to discuss the events at Nandankanan Zoo on 19th and 20th July, 2000. Union Ministry of Environment and Forests officials took a meeting with Chief Secretary, Govt. of Orissa, Secretary to Chief Minister, Govt. of Orissa, Principal Secretary (Forests) and the Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Govt. of Orissa on 21st July, 2000.

The reasons which might have led to flare up the disease were many ranging from over crowding of animals in the enclosures, ingress of livestock into the zoo because of breaches in the boundary wall, non-repair of fencing of white tiger safari that was damaged by the cyclone, unhygienic method of fencing and poor standards of drainage increase vector roles due to bushes and shrubs in the vicinity of the enclosures.

The Ministry has obtained inputs and opinion of experts from all over the country and drawn up a plan of action so that such incidence do not reoccur. This action plan will be monitored by a high level committee of the Union Government. No investigation by the CBI is therefore necessary.

SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, this is a matter of serious concern because this incident has attracted the attention of the entire nation. I do not know whether the Government, the

present Chief Minister, or, the Minister dealing with this are concerned or serious about the incident that had happened in the State. Today, you must have read—and we have also read in one of the Oriya newspapers—the statement made by the Minister..बाघ मर गया तो क्या हुआ? महोदय, यह बड़े शर्म की बात है। So, this kind of a statement has been given by the Minister. Instead of handling the situation, he is making such a statement. Then, yesterday, another incident took place in the zoo. You must have read in the national newspaper that a crocodile, a rare crocodile of American origin , had been beheaded. Nobody knows as to what happened in the Zoo itself. I will tell you one thing. I do not know whether everybody knows about it. One of the hon. Minister in the Government had asked for the resignation of the present Minister in the State. I do know what happened thereafter. The Minister of the State Government has also said that there are very serious complaints about this. I do not know whether the hon. Minister is aware of the complaints made by the Minister of the State Government regarding serving of half-meal, and that too sub-standard meat to the tigers in the Zoo for days together. This is one of the main reasons for the depletion of tigers population in the Zoo, and which has also led to the death of the tigers. If this is correct, I would like to know in what way the complaints have been looked into by the Government and what progress has been made in the investigation on the death of tigers in mysterious circumstances? Of course, you have mentioned in your reply that you have appointed one investigating team which was supposed to give its report on its findings on 15th July, 2000. I would be happy if the hon. Minister could kindly elaborate the findings of that Committee. Sir, the death of 12 royal Bengal tigers could have been prevented had there been a trained, dedicated and specialists team of veterinary surgeons having knowledge of treatment of wild animals. Since these facilities are not

there in the Nandankanan Zoo, may I know from the hon. Minister whether any step is being taken by the Central Government to depute some expert veterinary doctors to the Zoo, till appropriate alternative arrangements are made by the Government of Orissa? Of course, you have mentioned in your reply that you are going to sent veterinary doctors for five years. But I would like to know whether you have sent the team or not. I want to have a specific answer on this point.

SHRI T. R. BAALU: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the hon. Member has given a lot of answers in his question itself. No doubt, Sir, it is a sad episode. But we have to learn lessons from this experience first of all, I could say to the hon. House that we are not having enough curricula as on the subject matter of treating animals, especially wild animals. Sir, the veterinarians share the experience by knowhow only. There is no clearcut curriculum in regard to this in the veterinary colleges.

Sir, as far as the report of the findings of the Commmittees' report on the death of Bengal tigers at Nandankanan Biological Park, Bhubaneswar, is concerned, I would like to quote both the findings:

The first finding is that the cause of death of the tigers at Nandankanan Zoo was Trypanosomiasis. Other pathogens which might have accentuated the diseases would be known by the end of this week, after the receipt of the tissue examination report from Orissa veterinary college. The second finding is that the choice of Berenil as a drug for treatment of Trypanosomiasis was appropriate. The third finding is that the administration of drug/prophylactics is usually done on a day when the Zoo is closed so that all the resources can be used to carry out the operation, and distraction from the visitors is not there. In this case also, the same norm was followed. Sir, the fourth finding is that the drug reaction, as a cause of the death, has been ruled out by the committee. The fifth finding

is that the number of tigers and lions being in excess of the number of feeding cells was the main bottleneck in the close observation of animals, their physical handling and treatment. It might have also lead to excessive stress on the animals which definitely flares up Trypanosomiasis. Sir, the Committee felt that after the super cyclone, additional vector load in the area had been added. The number of the vectors peaks during this part of the year. Over-crowding and the high vector load are mainly responsible for the outbreak. Although there are some reports about the transmission of certain species of Trypanosomiasis through the oral route, in this case, the possibilities are quite remote because the organism affects only through the blood vascular system. The last one is that the zoo management has been unable to complete the repair work of the tiger safari park after the super cyclone and, thereby, kept the area out of use. Had the safari been repaired in time, the overcrowding of the animals in Enclosure No. 33 would have been avoided. The ingress of cattle that act as a reservoir of Trypanosomiasis and other diseases through the gaps in the boundary wall and the safari fencing is also a matter of concern.

SHRI ANANTA SETHI: About the death of a crocodile also, may I know what has happened? What are the findings about this? May I know whether it is a fact that too much breeding in the State has led to the present situation? If so, what steps have been taken to take the opinion of zoo experts of other countries and reorganise the habitation accordingly so that the safety of tigers is ensured? Is it a fact that the tigers in the zoo were ill fed and under-nourished because the zoo officials did not have adequate funds? If so, what steps have been taken to enhance the budgetary provision for the Nandankanan zoo?

SHRI T. R. BAALU: Sir, we need not go around the world for experts. We have got enough expertise. At the same time, I would

say that the feeding was properly done. There was no cause for concern about feeding. As far as funds are concerned, we have given enough funds. It is for the State Government to spend them.

श्री अमर सिंह: धन्यवाद सभापति जी। नंदनकानन प्राणी-उद्यान में बाघ मारे गये हैं, यह बहुत ही गम्भीर विषय है। मुझे संज्ञान है कि सरकार ने इसके बारे में एक समिति बनाई है जिसमें किसी एन०जी०ओ० अथवा सरकार के बाहर के व्यक्ति को सम्मलित नहीं किया गया है। क्या सरकार ने ऐसा सरकारी कर्मचारियों और अपनी कमजोरियों को छिपाने के लिये किया है? इस मामले की छानबीन करने के लिये इंग्लैंड से एक विशेषज्ञ समिति आई थी। भविष्य में इस तरह की घटनाओं की पुनरावृत्ति न हो, क्या उसने इसके बारे में अपनी रिपोर्ट दी है इसका क्या कारण है कि सरकार ने इंग्लैंड से आई विशेषज्ञ समिति की रिपोर्ट पर प्रकाश नहीं डाला है? क्या सरकार ने अपनी कारगुजारियों को छिपाने के लिये इस प्रकार का कार्य किया है?

SHRI T. R. BAALU: Sir, there is no need for hiding the facts. We received the information from the Government of Orissa on the 5th. At the request of the hon. Chief Minister of Orissa who really wanted to know what happened in the Orissa Nandankanan zoo and requested me to arrange for a committee so that what exactly went wrong could be analysed and found and, if there was anything wrong, that could be corrected—this is what he told me-on the 6th, we arranged a committee. The committee went to the zoo and enquired into it. It went through the records and finally gave a report on the matter on the 15th.

Over and above this, my Ministry wanted to know the exact things, not only about this particular issue but also other issues connected with treatment and other things . So, we had a workship in Chennai on the 19th and the 20th where experts from all over the country gave proper advice. They deliberated for two days. On the 21st, we requested the State Government to send their top officials. Its top officials came here. My Ministry officials had a lengthy interaction with them. Finally, the Chief Secretary of the Orissa Government was kind enough to take some disciplinary action. There is nothing to hide. In fact, we are sending an expert team to go into the minor details in zoos such as whether there is any discrepancy in maintaining the animals or whether any fund requirement is necessary. The top-level committee that is being sent shortly will find

out about all these things. They will have three months's time so that they can go from zoo to zoo and find out the exact things. The hon. Member has said that there is no NGO expert in the Management Committee of the Zoo. We have sent an NGO expert there. I do not remember his name, but he is from Andhra Pradesh.

SHRI AMAR SINGH: What about specialists from U.K.?

SHRI T.R. BAALU: We have enough of expertise here. So, it is not necessary to have their services.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now we take up the clubbed question — Question No. 90 Shri S. Ramachandran Pillai. The Hon. Member is absent.

SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Sir, the hon. Minister in his reply has said that we do not have enough curricula in regard to wild life. That means, without having any curricula in regard to wild life, we have kept thousands of wild animals in various zoos all over the country. It means, we have no moral right to keep them in the zoos. Since we have kept these wild life, I would like to know from the Government whether they will finalise a detailed curricula in regard to wild life and also issue guidelines to all the zoos.

Part (b) of my question is, I would like to know whether the Central Government and the Central zoo Authority is giving regular grants to the zoos, including the Nandankanan zoo of Orissa. If so, what is the amount given in 1999-2000, specially after the cyclone, to repair the zoos and to take necessary steps for the protection of animals.

Part (c) of my question is about setting up of inquiries Wild animals, including tigers and crocodiles, peacocks were killed in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. Why is the Government feeling shy in ordering a C.B.I. inquiry? I would like to know whether the Government will re-consider its stand have the matter inquired into by the CBI.

SHRI T.R. BAALU: After the cyclone, the Nandankanan zoo had been given assistance to the tune of Rs. 100 lakhs. In 1999-2000,

we had given Rs. 65 lakhs, and in 2000-01, we have given Rs. 40 lakhs. That means, in the post-cyclone period, we have given Rs. 100 lakhs.

I think investigation by the C.B.I. on this question is unnecessary.

SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: Sir, the hon. Minister has admitted the absence of curricula; he has also admitted that the conditions there were unhygienic. It is also admitted that inbreeding was going on. Sir, you have 230 zoos, you have 65,000 animals, but you do not have qualified staff. May I know from the hon. Minister whether he would consider reduction in the number of zoos, for better management and control, if he cannot abolish the zoos altogether?

SHRI T.R. BAALU: We have got 199 registered zoos. We are not having the exact curricula for the treatment of animals in times of emergency. That is what I have said. Here in India, veterinary students are not taught on this speciality. That is what I have said.

As far as the question of reduction in the number of zoos is concerned, this is a suggestion. Let the Committee go through the conditions in all the zoos and report; then we will look into the whole question.

SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: When do you expect the report to be submitted?

SHRI T.R. BAALU: As I said, I have given them three months. They have to go around 199 zoos and then report.

SHRI T.N. CHATURVEDI: Sir, the hon. Minister has called this as a dismal and said episode. It is, in fact, so. But, it is not just an episode. Unfortunately, these things have been continuing fairly for long; and, at a number of places, at different times they have taken 2-A place and continue to take place. That is why it is a matter of grave concern for both the Central and the State Governments. They have to coordinate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.